Language at work | First and second conditionals

1 If you need to make an important decision at work or in your personal life, do you talk to other people first? Which people usually give you good advice?

2 Read this email from Ilse, a business owner, to Jeff, a consultant, and answer the questions.

- What decision does Ilse have to make?
- What are her options?
- What advice do you think Jeff will give her?

Dear Jeff,

I'm writing to you to ask for your expert advice. We've got the opportunity to relocate our computer games shop to a new out-of-town shopping centre. If we move, we'll probably have a larger base of potential (and wealthy) customers.

However, there is a downside. If we don't keep our shop in town, we may lose our current customers who are local students without cars. I don't think they'll travel all the way to the new premises. Obviously, if we had more money, we'd keep the shop in town and open up at the shopping centre too, but that's not a realistic option.

We'd greatly appreciate it if you could advise us on this matter.

Many thanks and best wishes,

Ilse



3 Match sentences a–c from the email to the two types of conditionals in the *Language point*. Use the words in **bold** to help you.

LANGUAGE POINT

a If we **move**, we'**ll** probably **have** a larger base of potential customers.
b If we **don't keep** our shop in town, we **may lose** our current customers.
c If we **had** more money, we'**d keep** the shop in town.

1 First conditional: *if* + present simple, *will/may/might/can* + infinitive
We use the first conditional to talk about possible future situations.

2 Second conditional: *if* + past simple, *would/could* + infinitive
We use the second conditional to talk about an imaginary or unreal situation that is improbable or impossible.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

1 *If managers encourage more water-cooler chat, their employees will become happier, more productive and more engaged with their work.*

a What tense is used in the *if*-clause?

b What time is the result clause referring to: future or present?

c Is the situation described in the sentence likely or unlikely?

2 *If companies provided a choice, productivity and happiness would increase.*

a What tense is used in the *if*-clause?

b Is the sentence referring to the past?

c Is the situation described in the sentence definitely going to happen, or is it less probable?

4 Underline the correct words in *italics*.

1 If you asked the bank for a loan to keep both shops, they probably *won't / wouldn't* give you it.

2 I might be able to put you in touch with an investor if you *'re / were* interested.

3 If you *want / wanted* to meet me tonight, I can give you some detailed feedback on your idea.

4 I'd even lend you the extra money if I *have / had* it.

5 *If / Unless* your customers have cars, they won't be able to travel to your shop.

6 *Will / Would* you need to move if your online business takes off?

7 What *will / would* you do if there wasn't a new shopping centre?

7 **Complete the conditional sentences with the correct form of the verbs in brackets.**

1 If you use social media for work, you _____ (be) connected 24/7.

2 We _____ (not have) space for private offices if we move to a smaller location.

3 If we give workers more breaks, they _____ (spend) more time chatting.

4 We _____ (have) better coffee breaks if we had a nice break room.

5 You would know your colleagues better if you _____ (talk) to them more.

6 If the management stopped workers using social media, people _____ (be) unhappy.

7 If we had our meetings in a café, they _____ (feel) less formal.

8 If you _____ (turn) off your phone at six o'clock every night, your kids would be happier!

LIVEWORKSHEETS

5 Complete sentences 1–8 with your own words and ideas.

Example: *If you ignore unimportant jobs which aren't urgent, they normally disappear.*

1 If you ignore unimportant jobs which aren't urgent, they …
2 If you don't trust your instincts sometimes, then …
3 One day, I might start my own business if …
4 Unless a business consults its employees from time to time, it …
5 If managers didn't delegate, they …
6 If managers can't make quick decisions, then they …
7 No group of workers can achieve a consensus if …
8 If my company offered me early retirement, I …

6 Work with a partner. Take turns to read your full sentences in **5**. As you listen, compare your ideas and check your partner used the correct verb form.

7 Work with a partner or in small groups. What will/would you do if …?

- your company is/was relocated to another part of the country or abroad
- your company is/was taken over by its main competitor
- your partner gets/got a new job a long way from home/abroad
- your boss's job becomes/became vacant

8A Work in pairs. Match each communication problem (1–4) with two possible solutions (a–h).

Communication problems	Possible solutions
1 Workers don't know each other very well. There isn't a strong sense of teamwork.	a Take the entire team (75 people) on an adventure holiday.
2 The open-plan office is too noisy to make phone calls easily.	b Move to a building that's three times bigger and give every employee a private office.
3 We don't have a place where workers naturally meet for informal chats.	c Encourage more informal communication.
4 Employees complain that even when they're at home, they feel they're at work because of the constant texts and emails on their smartphones.	d Provide a few small, private rooms for employees to use when needed.
	e Buy every employee a smartphone for work that they can turn off when they go home.
	f Create a small break area near the water cooler with a couple of sofas and comfortable chairs.
	g Encourage employees not to respond to work texts and emails outside of office hours.
	h Buy the café next to the office building and turn it into a private break room.

B Discuss the problems and possible solutions. Use the first conditional for more likely solutions and the second conditional for less likely solutions.

If we wanted to develop a sense of teamwork, we could take the entire team on an adventure holiday.

If we encourage informal communication, workers will get to know each other better.

C For each problem, think of one additional solution. Explain it using the first or second conditional.

LIVEWORKSHEETS